

BOS Budget Hearing Testimony  
Suzanne Garrison, Chair  
SACC Parent Advisory Council  
April 5, 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Suzanne Garrison and I live in the Braddock District. I am here today as the Chair of the School Age Child Care program's Parent Advisory Council. I represent the over 10,000 Fairfax County families who - because of the essential services provided by SACC - can work full time and know that their children are safe, having fun; and through SACC's innovative curriculum, supports and nurtures their love of learning and development.

As you know Fairfax County thrives when all residents are able to join the economic and social mainstream. Our County's health & human services system - including the SACC program and all Office for Children programs which support the early care of children - lead families, schools and communities toward a culture of good health, self-sufficiency and productivity. These attributes contribute to a robust economy and quality of life for everyone. The PAC appreciates your continued support of SACC's sliding fee scale which ensures working families have access to affordable, quality school age child care which serves 14,000 children yearly.

Last year I had the pleasure of sharing stories told to me by SACC parents, about the important role SACC has had in the healthy development of their child. Parents are excited about how much fun their children have each day in SACC. The SACC environment provides the opportunity for children to develop friendships, self-confidence and leadership skills. Children and parents love the amazing staff that enthusiastically share their own talents and consistently provide engaging experiences in all areas of learning. Parents appreciate the opportunities children have to participate in STEM experiences, physical activity, art, the performing arts, and both local and global community service projects.

In addition to the wonderful daily experiences offered to children, centers can also participate in several multi-center program-wide events throughout the year. Beginning in the fall and continuing to June, SACC hosts a Flag Football Tournament, Short Play Festival, Performance Showcase, Track & Field Meet, Cardboard Boat Regatta and coming soon – its first annual STEM Science Fair!

These events provide children from centers across the county an opportunity to come together and share their talents and skills on a large scale. Imagine running a relay race around the track of a high school cheered on by not just family and friends, but hundreds of supporters. Or performing on a high school or community center stage in front of an auditorium that is filled-to-capacity with an audience whose boisterous applause makes you feel like a star. How about getting to throw out the first ball at a National's baseball game or performing the pre-game or half-time show for the Mystic's basketball game in front of not hundreds, but thousands of spectators with your image appearing on a giant screen that also highlights the Fairfax County SACC Program.

This year, SACC will be piloting a STEM Science Fair. In preparation for the science fair, children at participating centers have been busy formulating hypotheses, conducting experiments, documenting their observations, drawing results based conclusions, and having fun learning the scientific method. The event will be supported by representatives and exhibits from Apple, the Huda Hazy National Air & Space Museum, STEMtree, GMU STEM Program, Nike, Cyberjutsu, and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Wow!

These are just some of the big events and experiences in SACC that encourage children to dream big, try something new and pursue their passions. Children are learning that they are part of a much larger community that values them and believes in their future. As part of SACC's emphasis on giving back to the community, children have the opportunity to participate in a variety of community service projects such as knitting & sewing hats for ill children, participating in school and neighborhood clean-ups, and collecting supplies and non-perishable food items. This year the families attending the SACC Performance Showcases collected non-perishable food items to support the efforts of local non-profit organizations FACETS and United Community Ministries. The children were proud to donate over 543 pounds of food to UCM this year!

SACC contributes to our children's growth, stability, and daily success through valuable partnerships with schools and community organizations in more ways than I have time to share with you today. At our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings, every parent introduces themselves, and proudly declares he or she has the best SACC team and center. As parents, we want the best for our children and we believe that is what SACC provides.

We are grateful to the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County for your ongoing support of the SACC program. We are confident in this Board's dedication to ensuring that the safe environment and high-quality school age child care services provided by SACC remain accessible and affordable for ALL Fairfax County families.

Thank you again for your continued support of SACC. We hope to see you at one of the fantastic upcoming events which are highlighted in my handout. You will see that SACC is not an ordinary child care program, but an extraordinary one. I promise you will be amazed and proud of your continued support!

We are One Fairfax!